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THE SOUTH SECEDES?

by Felix Morley

It may be called a defection of the South from the Democratic Party. Or it may be called a defection of the Democratic Party from the South. The definition depends upon individual viewpoint. What does not depend upon viewpoint is the fact that one of the two major parties is disintegrating.

The underlying reasons for this disintegration are not complex. The Democratic Party has long been an amalgam of essentially discordant elements. Predominant among these have been the political bosses who could deliver the northern cities and the too often demagogic leaders who could deliver the southern states. Tammany and its offshoots in other urban centers built their strength on exploited immigrant labor. Southern "Democracy" built its strength on "White Supremacy".

Obviously the two wings of the Party have long been in fundamental opposition. The northern Democrats based their case on the support of a submerged element. The southern Democrats based their case on repression of a submerged element. But as long as the Party as a whole maintained the principle of States' Rights the lack of unity could be disguised. Under home rule it was reasonable that the Democratic Party should have wholly different objectives in different parts of the country.

The Administration of Franklin D. Roosevelt ended that unity by its policy of centralization. Contemporaneously it seemed to many that President Roosevelt was unifying his party, simply because under his command candidates with the Democratic label secured more votes and won easier victories than ever before.

Actually Mr. Roosevelt destroyed his party. His political adroitness served only to conceal the absence of principle which a political party exists to further. Using depression and war as an excuse, President Roosevelt worked ceaselessly to build an all-powerful central government, thus strengthening patronage but simultaneously destroying the vigor of local self-government in the process.

And so the split which is now out in the open became inevitable. It was bound to come after Mr. Roosevelt's death and after the end of the war, even if the successor to the throne were a great deal more sagacious than Mr. Truman has proved himself. A wiser man than Mr.

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Truman would have concentrated on saving either the city machines or the "Solid South" for his party. The distinctive achievement of the present President is very likely going to be the loss of both.

II

The candidacy of Henry Wallace will naturally focus on those elements in the Democratic Party which really believe in political democracy. But it also has an appeal for voters who see the awful mess the Roosevelt foreign policy has produced, yet do not realize that the mess was largely created by the Administration of which Mr. Wallace was a part.

In the Wallace movement the Communists have already taken active leadership and may be expected to exert more and more influence as the campaign progresses. For this there are three reasons.

First: The Taft-Hartley Act, and increasing Labor awareness of Communist infiltration, have temporarily blocked the Communist effort to capture American unionism and gain power in this country by industrial action. Stalled on the industrial front, it is natural that the able Communist leadership should turn its attention to political action in the United States.

Second: In this situation Mr. Wallace emerges as the ideal Communist candidate because he stands for appeasement of Soviet Russia without himself being classified as a Communist. He is also a link with the still lingering legend of Roosevelt perspicacity and idealism. The fantastic assumption that all would have been well had Roosevelt lived is a natural for Communist exploitation. As one of Roosevelt's inner circle, Henry Wallace is made to order as a front for Communist intrigue.

Third: The foggy yet passionate utterances of Mr. Wallace, together with his background as a Democratic leader, assist Communist exploitation of the word "democracy". As the Founders of the American Republic were well aware, unrestricted political democracy in the sense of unqualified majority rule is certain to lead to tyranny. Since the Communist goal is tyranny, the easiest way to attain it is through pressure for unrestricted democracy.

Czechoslovakia has now been made thoroughly "democratic", as the Russians use the word. The process was greatly helped by the incapacity of a much-publicized but fundamentally bewildered President -- Eduard Benes -- who constantly preached "democracy". The Communist dream is that Wallace might come to be the Benes of America.

This dream is by no means unrealistic, for whatever the Communist leadership may lack in morals, it makes up in intelligence. The Communist leaders are far more familiar with the Communist Manifesto

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than most graduates of our colleges are with the American Constitution. Henry Wallace will be ably exploited by the Communists, and one may predict that the size of his popular vote, in November, will be as startling to many Americans as it will be pleasing to the Kremlin.

III

It was the disintegration on the Left Wing of the Democratic Party which pushed Mr. Truman to the blunder which has alienated the Right Wing. The South has long been watching encroachment on the doctrine of States' Rights with increasing concern. The President's ten point "civil rights program" was meant to counter the seductions of Henry Wallace. It has succeeded only in forcing many Southern Democrats to consider secession from the Party.

The individual reaction is taking various forms, such as resignation from Party office, withholding of Party funds and open denunciation of Party leadership. But the most interesting and significant procedure is that initiated by Governor William M. Tuck, of Virginia. On February 26, at Richmond, he urged the Legislature of that state to adopt a new election statute, making it clear that Presidential elections in Virginia are wholly uncommitted by the action of the national nominating convention.

This procedure is unquestionably in accord with the first section of Article II of the Constitution, which lays down the system for what has come to be known as the Electoral College, and makes provision for election of the President by the House of Representatives if no one candidate secures a majority of the electoral votes.

The indirect election of Senators was ended by the Seventeenth Amendment, adopted in 1913. Procedure for the indirect election of the President and Vice-President has never been fundamentally revised, though modified in respect to the Vice-Presidential office by the Twelfth Amendment, in 1804. But for over a century custom has deprived the electors of all power of choice. They have automatically cast their votes for the party nominees, and in effect this has resulted in popular election of the President.

This understanding has in fact, though not in law, modified the clear intent of the Constitution. As far back as 1885 a great English Constitutional lawyer -- A. V. Dicey -- could write on this matter that:

> "The power of an elector to elect is as completely abolished by constitutional understandings in America as is the royal right of dissent from bills passed by both Houses . . . in England."

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The significance of the southern repudiation of present Democratic leadership lies in the suggestion that the indirect election of the President could be restored, Mr. Dicey to the contrary notwithstanding. If so, the historic significance of the southern break would be far greater than that of the maverick action taken by Mr. Wallace.

Students of The Federalist are aware of the importance which the Founding Fathers attached to the indirect election of the President. In Number 68 of these essays, Hamilton pointed out that this part of the Constitution was the only one "which has escaped without severe censure, or which has received the slightest mark of approbation from its opponents".

From the system which was planned to give the electors a free choice in selecting the President, Hamilton concluded that:

> "The process of election affords a moral certainty that the office of President will never fall to the lot of any man who is not in an eminent degree endowed with the requisite qualifications."

That moral certainty is decidedly not present under the tacit modification of the Constitution which has long made the electoral college a mere rubber stamp for party nominees. So the effort to restore something of its original significance to the role of the electors is not the least significant of Virginia's many contributions to the theory of American government. In the words used by Governor Tuck to the general Assembly at Richmond:

> "The electoral vote of the South has been counted by the Democratic Presidents even before it was cast. . . .
>
> "If Virginia and the other Southern States should find it necessary for their own self-preservation to hold their electoral votes in abeyance, I believe it would prove an effective remedy for most of our grievances and insure us an influential voice in the councils of our respective parties.
>
> "The seeds sown here in Virginia may take root and flourish elsewhere. There are many persons of high ideals in all parts of the nation who are unwilling to undermine the foundation of government for the sake of a mere temporary political advantage, and who would be eager to join us in our fight to preserve it."

In any case, with the irony in which Clio delights, the New Deal has taken our political thinking right back to "horse and buggy" days. The aftermath of Franklin Roosevelt is leading to the happy discovery that there is much to be said for the "Old Deal" of Constitutional -- as opposed to personal -- government.

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Not Merely Gossip *A Supplement to* Human Events VOL. V, NO. 9

By Frank C. Hanighen March 3, 1948

The southern revolt represents, at present, an attempt by the southern Democrats to recapture their former preferred position in the Party. It is not now an exodus from the Party, nor an effort to form a new one. The movement is affected by deep currents, now running strongly, in the life of the South -- economic and social forces which challenge the old order. In the long run, as Felix Morley suggests this week, such a revolt could eventually result in secession from the Party. But today it is no more than a vigorous counterattack within the ranks.

Smoldering discontent gives the impetus. The Southerners have felt, to put it mildly, slighted. What Truman has lacked, it is said, is a Cordell Hull and/or Jimmy Byrnes. The President has not proved as adroit in dealing with the Southerners as his predecessor. For many years, it was a common observation that FDR kept Cordell Hull in the State Department, not to run foreign affairs, but to "take care of Southerners on the Hill". Byrnes, first as Senator, later as head of War Mobilization, performed a similar mission. Many a southern uprising in those days was prevented by the presence of these men in the Administration, or by their activities in behalf of the White House. But Truman has no Hull, nor Byrnes.

It was no accident that the revolt flared right after the defeat of the Democrats in the Bronx. It appeared as if in accordance with physical law: when one traditional source of power (the northern city machines) declined in prestige, the other (the South) rose. The ascent receives strong pressure from below, from easily aroused emotions; and from the scramble of local politicos gratified to find such a handy issue on which they can build or retain power. Finally, as defeat for the Party looms, the Southerners calculate that they can regain their pre-eminence if their northern cohorts are swamped.

The means indicated for enforcing their will may take the southern politicos far: in the short run, probably back to their pre-Roosevelt position; in the long run, possibly into an independent party. They want many things: the smothering of the civil rights bill; the return of the 2/3 rule in Party conventions -- symbol of their former preferred status; the Vice-Presidency on the ticket for one of them; and a pledge that a Southerner gets a Cabinet place, if the Party wins.

The revolt may have gone so far that Truman cannot be renominated. Certainly the President is in an unenviable position. Many observers believe that he cannot extricate himself from this plight. The only path back to leadership seems to be the obvious one of trying to marshal all forces behind him in defiance of Stalin. Can he do it? The contradictions implicit in his Palestine policy underline the difficulty of such a role now. And the figure of Vandenberg looms larger. The prevalent guess is that Truman has not the political skill or personal power to ride to victory now.

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There is one ray of light for the Administration -- reassurance about business prospects is increasing. As reported in this column on February 14, economic experts at that time saw good reason why the grain crash should have no deep repercussions on the general economy. Nevertheless, they kept a wary eye on all relevant statistics because a wave of mass buyer resistance might conceivably develop with depressing effects. It was then too soon to assess the trend.

In the past two weeks, however, economic data has offered some encouragement. Total new orders have shown increases since the middle of January, and in the two weeks ending February 14 reached the highest levels in the past two years. Orders for non-durable goods in these two significant weeks fell below the exceptionally

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high 1947 volume but were still very large. Durable goods orders in the first half of February approached record levels. However, the collapse of the furniture market and other indications are offsetting factors. Therefore, the mood is one of cautious optimism.

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The new American approach to the problem of Palestine in the UN has created a field dotted with difficult hurdles -- instead of the straight-away course for the 100-yard dash anticipated by the Zionists. The Colombian proposal to reconsider the whole policy of partition has undoubtedly much support in the Council, and unless U. S. pressure is strongly against it, might win. But even if that hurdle were overcome, there are others.

The United States proposes that the Holy Land situation be declared a threat to the peace, and that armed forces be sent to maintain order. But, in the atmosphere of strict legality which Mr. Austin has created, there will be those members of the UN who will challenge the legality of such a solution. Protracted debate might, however, finally push through the American suggestion. Yet, even then, the thorny problem of the composition of such a force would rise. Additionally, there are those who want to send the question to the International Court.

Meanwhile, neither the Arabs nor Zionists show a disposition to be helpful. One prominent Arab was heard to say: "The Zionists bought the Assembly; they will buy the Council; and they will buy the International Court. Why should we cooperate?" And Mr. Moshe Shertok of the Jewish Agency, in his speech on February 27, seemed to envisage war to the bitter end. However, the State Department apparently feels some confidence in its effort to get Zionist co-operation. A knowing wink accompanies the proposal to declare a threat to the peace, then send a force to keep order. It is suggested -- to the Zionists -- that then the troops would remain to enforce partition.

The State Department has pulled off another sly political trick. It has emphasized that, before American troops could be sent to Palestine, Congress would have to give approval. It is doubted that Capitol Hill would do so. But, even if the matter does not get that far, the State Department has won a victory. Many pro-Zionist Members of Congress would feel most unhappy if faced with the problem of voting for a force. So already there is noticeable an aversion to any oratory on Palestine up on the Hill. There may be a chance that the State Department can proceed to a Holy Land settlement unhampered by substantial political interference on the part of Congress. By threatening to "throw the baby" into Congress' lap, State has won a rubber.

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While Finland is obviously right in line on the Soviet list after Czechoslovakia, Italy is regarded as the next really important target. Elections are seven weeks away and a furious campaign is under way. It is estimated, by reliable observers, that the Communists are tapping a campaign chest amounting to about $50 million. The Reds won a notable victory recently in the Pescara municipal election. Few will deny that the margin of the result will be narrow, nor that the outcome will be decisive for the fate of the country.

There is much speculation as to whether the Communists will try to stage a coup d'etat before the elections, or immediately after. The underground Red forces are said to be formidable; and there is doubt that the Carabinieri will be numerous enough to halt such an attempt. A Soviet Marshal was reported to be in Italy several months ago incognito, and he may still be there, organizing and preparing the Communist formations. What is known definitely is that every cell includes at least one Slav, an agent of the Cominform sent from Belgrade. One of the Communist

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plans of action is said to involve seizure of areas near the Yugoslav border. A "Free Italian" capital would presumably be established in this region, in direct communication with Tito's army. The pattern is the same as in northern Greece.

Meanwhile there are the makings of a scandal, into which the U. S. Congress might well inquire. The French publication Hautes Etudes Americaines, for February, speaking of the "gravity of the menace which hangs over Italy", reports: "The center of the distribution of arms is located in Naples where a vast arms traffic has, during the past two years, furnished to the Communist front all types of arms, principally of American origin, of a total estimated value of about $1,200,000."

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"Operation Blunder" is one term, among others, we could apply to the dismantling policy in Germany. A correspondent, who until recently served in Military Government in Germany, writes us describing the plight of a soap plant in Wuerttemberg-Baden, which for some mysterious reason had been ordered dismantled. Furious efforts were made to cancel or postpone the order. In the course of these exertions, it was learned that the Allied Reparations Agency had no requests from any Allied nation for soap plant machinery. The dismantling of the plant, therefore, would be "pure destruction", as our correspondent said.

This, it develops, is not an isolated case. Our correspondent tells us that, in general, plants are not offered to Allied nations until they are dismantled! This should dispose of one stock argument for dismantling -- that these dismantled plants are all used elsewhere than in Germany, according to an intelligent plan for the economic rehabilitation of Europe; and that therefore no productive capacity is lost by dismantling.

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Over two years ago, HUMAN EVENTS assailed the Nuremberg trials as a "Travesty of Justice". On November 21, 1945, the Analysis called the proceedings a "shoddy legal masquerade in which our Government sits as judge in its own cause . . . which history is likely to define as highly-organized lynchings".

Now a retiring justice of the Nuremberg tribunal gives some support to our attitude. Charles F. Wennerstrum, a member of the Iowa Supreme Court, made the following remarks to a Chicago Tribune reporter (February 23): "The victor in any war is not the best judge of the war crime guilt. Try as you will it is impossible to convey to the defense, their counsel, and their people that the court is trying to represent all mankind rather than the country which appointed its members. . . . The high ideals announced as motives for creating these tribunals have not been evident. The prosecution has failed to maintain objectivity, aloof from vindictiveness, aloof from personal ambitions for convictions. It has failed to strive to lay down precedents which might help the world to avoid future wars. The entire atmosphere was unwholesome. . . . . The trials were to have convinced the Germans of the guilt of their leaders. They convinced the Germans merely that their leaders lost the war to tough conquerors.

"Most of the evidence in the trials was documentary, selected from the large tonnage of captured records. The selection was made by the prosecution. The defense had access only to those documents which the prosecution considered material to the case. Our tribunal introduced a rule of procedure that when the prosecution introduced an excerpt from a document, the entire document should be made available to the defense for presentation as evidence. The prosecution protested vigorously. . . . The lack of appeal leaves me with a feeling that justice has been denied."

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Book Events

Wellsprings of the American Spirit, edited by F. Ernest Johnson. New York: Harper and Brothers, $2.50. Reviewed by J. M. Lalley.

Here we have another in the series of symposia organized by the Institute for Religious and Social Studies of the Jewish Theological Seminary. The contributors, of course, are of various religious professions; what they have in common is a kind of academic portentousness, for with one or two exceptions they are all pedagogues by vocation. They seek to explain the various spiritual, material and social influences which have combined to produce the distinctive temper of our civilization, or, to use the ritualistic language of the Symposiarch, Professor Johnson, "the various forms of expression in which the American people have undertaken to make explicit the values of the democratic tradition".

Professor Herbert W. Schneider for example undertakes to determine just how much the early New England Puritanism has contributed to the national ethos. His conclusion appears to be that if Puritanism was one of the wellsprings, it dried up very early. The true Puritanism, as he observes, was a crisis theology, arising from the sense of human impotence and of utter dependence upon divine grace. It could hardly survive the complacent spirit engendered by the material prosperity resulting from a century or so of characteristic Yankee industry and thrift. Puritanism, therefore, is to be carefully differentiated from "the genteel tradition", which is the product of various historical factors, including the Eighteenth Century enlightenment and Nineteenth Century transcendentalism and a kind of ancestor worship. Outside New England, Puritanism, under the influence of the revivalists, lost its rigid intellectual character, and assumed the pietistic and emptional complexion that has been generally associated with American Protestantism. But if the word "Puritan" is more loosely defined to include the whole group of churches and sects which were in dissent from the Church of England, then its influence can be said to have been powerful and even decisive. Professor McNeil of Union Theological Seminary shows how the distrust of the sectaries for the colonial establishments, especially in the South, prepared a favorable climate for the political doctrines of John Locke. This, apparently, is the point at which Protestantism and the rationalist and secular spirit of the enlightenment converged, and it is not easy thereafter to disassociate them.

The extent to which the three centuries of the shifting American frontier have determined the American psychology and directed the development of American institutions is still a matter of almost angry dispute among historians, and in a milder temper the dispute is continued here. Professor Harold Rugg reiterates the doctrine of the late Professor Turner that the peculiarly pragmatist quality of the American mind, its disdain of metaphysics, its genius for improvisation, its fondness for practical innovation, were all developed by the exigencies of pioneer life. This is contested by Professor John Herman Randall, Jr., who emphasizes instead the creative role of coastal cities and the social forms produced by the intermingling of diverse races and cultures. Professor McNeil suggests that the pioneers might have carried their characteristics to the frontier instead of obtaining them there; in other words that they were a heritage from Scotch or Scotch-Irish ancestors. Several contributors remark the persistent dualism of the American spirit; that is, its disposition to pursue contrary values in the ideal and tangible universes. It is this dichotomy for example that made it possible for the same American to believe that all men are free and equal and that the only good Indian is a dead one, that now permits us to persuade ourselves, in the face of a somewhat turbulent history, that we have been the most peace-loving people on earth.

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